

Rebecca Buck

Subject: FW: [External] FY 2021 Budget

Thank you for considering support of the request of \$25,000 for NAMI VT from the Governor's FY2021 Budget. As a volunteer and a person who has received services from NAMI Vermont, this \$25,000 increase to our annual grant through the Department of Mental Health will be tremendously helpful in our efforts to continue to provide essential services especially now with the COVID-19 Pandemic.

NAMI VT was there when a close family member developed symptoms of OCD and high anxiety. Though I am a professional nurse and was able to get immediate medical attention for my family member, I was at a loss as to how best to support him and help him long term. There was not much available to help my husband and me deal with his behaviors. NAMI VT provided that help and support through their Family to Family program. Since that experience, I became a volunteer instructor for the F2F program and later have become a Board member and volunteer for other NAMI VT programs and events. But demand for NAMI VT services has increased. At a recent Family Support group that I attended, the room was overflowing. Schools are requesting assistance with suicide prevention education. These are two examples of a need to provide expanded services. COVID-19 has required us to be more creative in meeting our clients' needs.

NAMI Vermont is the independent Vermont chapter of the National Alliance on Mental Illness. We are a statewide, non-profit, 501c3, grassroots, volunteer organization comprised of people who live with a mental health condition, family members, and advocates. Our mission is to "Educate, Support, and Advocate" so that individuals affected by mental illness or mental health challenges can build better lives. We are the only organization in the state that offers evidence-based, NAMI signature programs and support groups for families impacted by mental illness.

NAMI Vermont is extremely grateful for the support we have received in the form of an annual grant (\$230,810) from the Department of Mental Health which covers approximately two-thirds of our operating costs. This grant is critical to our mission, but it has been level-funded for the past six years and has not kept pace with inflationary increases.

Despite inflation and an increase in requests for our services, we have managed to maintain our programs at the current funding level, but we have not been able to expand to meet the growing need. By the end of this fiscal year, we will have exhausted two funding sources that allowed us to maintain our programs and services.

We are part of the foundation of the state's efforts to provide preventive, community-based mental health services and would like to continue to meet the needs of our fellow citizens. Please support a \$25,000 increase to our annual grant through the Department of Mental Health. Thank you for considering our request.

Respectfully,

Sara Moran, Vice President

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